

THE WORLD'S NATIONAL ANTHEMS,

Part IV - Central and South America

by

Grenadier.

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Three main factors govern the tunes, and the sentiments of the accompanying texts, which have been used as the National Anthems of the countries of Central and South America over the past 150 years or so.

Firstly, the peoples are predominantly Latin, which is an inheritance of the 300 year rule of Spain and Portugal. Secondly, their independence was achieved and the National Anthems composed at a time when Italian Grand Opera was stirring Latin hearts all over the World. Thirdly, the inspiration of the French Revolution, which had overthrown an autocratic tyranny as bad as that of Spain, was symbolized in the famous revolutionary march "La Marseillaise".

The Anthems of Central and South America are therefore sung to martial tunes of an operatic quality which confers great charm and beauty on them; small snatches of the Marseillaise can even be detected in some of the tunes.

Typically, the structure of a Latin American Anthem is made up of an opening FANFARE or INTRODUCTION. Then a CHORUS is sung followed by a VERSE sung by a tenor solo in which a change of musical key may occur. The CHORUS is then repeated, followed by another VERSE and so on. Sometimes the chorus and solo parts are not separated entirely and each provides responses to the other.

Most of the tunes are of considerable length. One rendering of El Salvador's Anthem takes about the same time as singing one verse of "God Save the Queen" 14 times in succession. The melody was written by a resident Italian musician in 1879, and is one of the most flamboyant Anthems of the American continent. The opening fanfare is reminiscent of the William Tell Overture used for the television series "The Lone Ranger".

As another example there was the famous occasion when Britain played Argentina at Wembley and the kick off was delayed by 5 minutes because of the playing of the Argentine National Anthem. I once asked an Argentine colleague if every man and woman in the street could sing their lengthy Anthem "off the cuff." "Oh yes," he replied, "even school children know it." And it seems that Argentine schools set aside a day from time to time to brush up their knowledge of the National Anthem. The melody was composed by Blas Parera, a Buenos Aires music teacher, in 1813, and is reputedly the longest of all Latin American songs. Its title "Marcha de la Patria" belies its tempo, as it sounds like an aria from an Italian opera. It has the honour of being the first National Anthem on the American continent.

General San Martín, the liberator of Chile, electrified the crowds in Chile's capital, Santiago, in 1818 by singing the Argentine Anthem in his deep bass voice. He was a keen musician and always insisted on regular practice by his Army bands whenever possible.

This occasion may have prompted Chile into producing an Anthem after her victory over the Spaniards at Maipú in 1818, but this Anthem (1819) was so insulting to Spain that diplomatic incidents occurred and a new National Anthem called "Dulce Patria" (Sweet land) was written in 1828. This melody, which is Chile's current Anthem, is a fiery march with a loud, brassy introduction in the "heroic" style of Grand Opera, and is the work of a Spaniard who never set foot on Chilean soil!

The Anthems of at least 4 countries were composed to secure money prizes in National Competitions.

Mexico's "Mexicanos al grito de guerra" (Mexicans at the call of war) won such a competition for its composer, Nuño in 1854 but the prize money was not paid to Nuño until 1901, seven years before his death. The martial melody is very "audiogenic" i.e. whatever the quality of the band or orchestra which plays it, it always sounds tuneful and inspiring.

The Mexicans might well have realized this, as alteration of the music or text in any way was made an offence by law.

Peru's Anthem, "Somos libres, seámos lo siempre" (We are free, let us always be so) won a competition in 1821 for the composer Alzedo. It is a martial melody conforming to the typical structure of this type of National Anthem, and it too is protected by law from alteration.

The Anthem of Honduras was selected as a result of a Public Competition and was adopted in 1915.

Uruguay's National Anthem, "Orientales, la Patria o la tumba" (Eastern landsmen, our Country or the tomb) secured a money prize for the composers Deballi and Quijano in the National Competition of 1848. The tune is lengthy, Italian in style, and is said to resemble closely the Gondoliers' Chorus from Donizetti's opera "Lucrezia Borgia". This opera was written in 1833 and so it seems quite possible that this chorus was used as a basis for the Uruguayan Anthem.

In 1905 an Italian opera company failed in Bogotá the capital of Colombia. An Italian tenor solist named Orestes Sindici, who was one of the stranded members of the company, wrote a National Anthem for Colombia which is in current use today. The Anthem takes its title, like many of them do, from the words of the chorus "O Gloria inmarcesible, O jubilo inmortal!" (Oh unfading glory, oh immortal joy) and has a typical South American structure in martial tempo. The opera company's bad luck turned out to be Colombia's good fortune!

Venezuela, too, was fortunate as her very tuneful Anthem "Gloria al bravo pueblo" (Glory to a brave people) was composed by Landaeta in 1811, but the composer perished the following year in the earthquake which devastated the capital, Carácas.

The Venezuelan Anthem has been called the "Venezuelan Marseillaise" because of its militant revolutionary sentiments. The melody is martial, and

chorus and solo verse parts provide responses to one another through the tune. However, it was not officially adopted as the National Anthem until 1881, seventy years after its composition.

Although 1000 miles apart, Brazil and Nicaragua share the distinction of being the only countries in Latin America to have changed their National Anthems since independence (this excludes Chile whose first Anthem was unacceptable).

The first Brazilian National Anthem is interesting in that it was composed by Dom Pedro IV of Portugal in one evening (September 7) in 1822 for Brazil, who had just declared her independence from Portugal! For this service the composer was made "honorary ruler" of Brazil as Dom Pedro I.

In 1831 on the accession of Dom Pedro II, Brazilian patriotism caused the first Anthem to be replaced by the present National Anthem composed by a professional Brazilian musician, Francisco Manoel da Silva, who was the Director of the National School of Music. The two Anthems are known respectively as "Hino da Independencia" and "Hino Nacional". They are both ~~are~~ fiery marches of some length.

It appears that Nicaragua did not possess a National Anthem until 1894 when "Hermosa Soberana" was adopted by General Zelaya's régime. In 1910 the present Anthem "Salve ^{a ti} ~~ti~~, Nicaragua" (Hail to thee, Nicaragua) replaced it. The composer is unknown, although the music dates from before 1821; in style the Nicaraguan Anthem differs from that of Latin America in that it proceeds from a brief introduction to a straight "all chorus" short time in martial tempo.

It may be of some local and topical interest to those who live in East Woodhay, because it is the Anthem of Bianca, wife of the world-famous Mick Jagger of Stargroves.

Cuba's "Himno Bayámo" or "La Bayamesa" was composed during the fierce Battle of Bayámo in 1868 when the Cubans defeated the Spanish Colonial forces.

The leader of the Cuban forces, Pedro Figueredo, had entered the village of Guanabocoa with his troops during the battle; the Anthem was written and sung then and there in the field. Unfortunately, Figueredo was captured and shot by the Spaniards two years later.

The "Himno Istmeño" (Isthmus Hymn) of Panama has a more peaceful history. It was adopted in 1904 when Panama broke away from Colombia, and it is surprising that this martial, typically structured melody was originally a school song!

Costa Rica's Anthem, "Noble Patria", was composed in a prison cell. The leading musician, Manuel Gutiérrez, was asked by his President in 1853 to compose a National Anthem which was to be played for the arrival of the British and American ambassadors.

Out of modesty Gutiérrez declined, and was promptly thrown into prison and kept there until he had set down a "plausibly playable tune". It is interesting that the tune, although melodious and martial, has a simpler style than most other Latin American Anthems.

The Haitian Anthem which is entitled "La Dessalinienne" was adopted in 1904, and named after the French General Dessalines who liberated the negro republic from Spain in 1804. The melody is short and martial, without the flamboyant trappings which are usually associated with the mainland Anthems.

The Dominican Republic which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti has a more "rolling" martial melody with an introduction, but without division into chorus and verses.

The texts of the National Anthems of Latin America are written in Spanish, except for Brazil which is in Portuguese, and Haiti which is in French. The sentiments of the texts follow the same general style; they fervently proclaim freedom from colonial rule, and describe the bloody struggles involved to achieve this end. They also vow that they will defend

this sacred freedom to the death if need be. Not surprisingly, the strong feelings about liberation make the Anthems of Latin America some of the most stable in the World, and contrary to some popular belief, they are not changed with the frequent revolutions that occur in that sphere.

It is surprising how interest in their own National Anthem differs from country to country. Paraguay's rather slow and mournful Anthem "Paraguayos, Republica o muerte!" (Paraguayans, a Republic or death!), and Ecuador's martial bombastic tune, with its "heroic" Grand Opera introduction, "Salve O Patria" (Hail to thee O Country) have not even been recorded in those countries. In contrast to this Bolivia has ~~even~~ issued stamps commemorating the centenary of the composition of her Anthem (1845); Guatemala's simple but haunting melody "Guatemala feliz!" (Happy Guatemala) was retained by public demand on RCA Victor's record catalogue, while a firm in Brazil sent me a record of the Brazilian Anthem by air mail, free of charge, because they were so pleased that some one in far away England was interested!

If any reader of "Spectrum" is interested in hearing any of the National Anthems of Central and South America, the offer made in Parts II and III of this series still stands, if he/she would forward a cassette to Grenadier, c/o Editor of "Spectrum".